224 a bear-bite, came one afternoon with two dogs and suggested a monitor hunt.

After having walked aimlessly through the jungle for the better part of an hour, we got impatient, and asked the Veddas what manner of hunt was this, and of what breed were their useless mongrels? They replied, and with justice, that the jungle was none of their choosing, and that there were no *goas* about for their dogs to scent them, as any one could see from the lack of traces. Once within the jungle, we had expected the dogs to shake off their lethargy and nose about at every scent. Not so these beasts, they hung on the heels of their masters, the least enthusiastic of the company. However, our remarks put the men on their mettle and, walking ahead, they tried to set their dogs to; one of them actually whistling and snapping his fingers after the manner of us in towns!

We had given up all hope of even seeing a monitor when suddenly there was a rustle in front of us, and a Vedda and his dog shot forward. We followed to find the Vedda gazing helplessly at a hole high up in the trunk of a tall tree, and his cur, its enthusiasm already wilted, lying contentedly with closed eyes, as if nothing was further from his thoughts than lizards in general and this one in particular.

224 The tree up which the reptile had sought refuge was quite four feet in diameter. The Vedda was not long in doubt as to how he should act. ●313 Walking round the tree he tapped it with the head of his axe, and, finding it reasonably hollow, what should he do but proceed to fell it with that toy axe of his the cutting edge of which was no more than one and a half inches! So astonished were we at this that we settled down to a smoke, and watched.

After almost two hours of arduous toil, the great tree groaned and bore slowly down through thwarting lianas and the boughs of its huddled neighbours. It hesitated in its fall and then, despite ominous cracklings, remained poised aslant. A half hour more, and a supporting tree of no small girth was sacrificed with many an obscene curse; then another, and another tree; and finally the giant fell.

But what of the monitor? There was not the least sign of him. The dogs, roused to expectation by the falling tree, had already resumed their repose. The Veddas, to their chagrin, discovered by tapping the trunk that its whole length was hollow. They hewed an opening into it some feet away from the entrance hole; and then with long sticks vainly tried to poke the reptile out. Two more windows were made, and much more progging done before, with the onset of dark, the project was abandoned as hopeless. "Why not have smoked the animal out?" you will ask; we did suggest it, only to learn that, while it would answer for the pangolin, it was useless for the monitor which tenacious creature will rather die suffocated in its lair than emerge to fall a victim to axe or canine jaw. That little beast certainly had the laugh of us!

This incident demonstrates well how wasteful of forest vegetation Veddas are. Often one sees great trees—even satin or ebony—felled across the path, only to find on inspecting them that they were sacrificed for a parrot's nest or a honey-comb! Be the crime what it may in the eyes of the law, it required a demonstration such as this to inspire us with respect for the toy-like axe the Vedda carries on his shoulder, and the stamina of his stringy arm.

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